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THE OPERATIONS OF THE THIRD BATTALION, 506th PARACHUTE
INFANTRY REGIMENT (101st AIRBORNE DIVISION) AT THE
MARSHALLING AREA IN ENGLAND AND HOLLAND FROM 14 - 19
SEPTEMBER 1944
(RHINELAND CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Battalion Intelligence Officer)

Type of Operation described: AIRBORNE INFANTRY BATTALION
IN AN AIRBORNE INVASION

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THE OPERATIONS OF THE THIRD BATTALION, 506th
PARACHUTE INFANTRY REGIMENT (101st AIRBORNE DIVISION)
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INTRODUCTION

It was in September 1944, and our armies had battered the German forces in the west until their line stretched thinly from Antwerp southward through Aachen, Metz, and Belfort to the border of Switzerland. (Map A)

General Eisenhower had announced that five panzer divisions had been totally destroyed, six others badly mauled, twenty infantry divisions had been eliminated, and twelve more were completely disorganized. The Germans had lost about 400,000 soldiers compared to our losses of 112,673. (1)

The once powerful Nazi war machine now seemed shocked and stunned to find themselves being pushed back by the fast moving Allied Forces. The Allies had been advancing rapidly since the Normandy invasion. The Germans continued their retreat, anxious to occupy the strong defensive positions in the Voegse Mountains, and along the well planned Siegfried Line which was reinforced by the Rhine River. (2)

It appeared that the Germans already had definite plans to make their present positions impregnable. They seemed to know that any major penetration would possibly sound doom and bring destruction to their "Fatherland". (3)

Although the Allies had been exceedingly successful in their fast sweep through France and Belgium, many new problems were facing them. The most difficult of these problems were those involving all classes of supplies. Never in history had a war been so expensive in materiel or demanded such quantities of ammunition, gasoline, food, clothing, and the many other vital items required by modern warfare. (4)

The Allied Armies had stretched their supply routes and had overloaded them almost to the breaking point. The highways over France and Belgium

(1) A-1, p. 316; (2) A-2, p. 321; (3) A-2, p. 321; (4) A-3, p. 11.

were beginning to crumble under the constant rolling of the heavily loaded supply trucks. The railroads, still suffering from the Nazi plundering and the Allied bombings, could offer little aid in transporting our supplies. The only serviceable seaport in the Allied area was at Cherbourg and it was located too far in the rear. The harbor facilities at Cherbourg were already straining under the excessive amount of supplies required to feed our front lines. (5)

These increased problems of logistics and a more determined enemy caused the Allies to halt their advance. It was now the time to take an inventory of our front and formulate new plans - something had to be done to solve the supply problems. (6)

About the middle of September 1944, the high command found the Canadian First Army and the British Second Army ^{now} situated along the Meuse - Recart Canal; the American First Army was bitterly engaged south of Aachen and had almost pushed through Luxembourg; the U. S. Third Army occupied the high ground along the Moselle River. The U. S. Seventh Army and the French Forces were in contact with the U. S. Third Army west of Epinal, France. (7) (Map A)

ALLIED STRATEGY

Our armies had consolidated their positions and were poised for what looked to be a long and deliberate war. The high command, still realizing the critical supply situation confronting the front line division, dreaded the thought of a prolonged war. They devised an ambitious plan aimed at the stomach of the Axis and, if successful, it would bring Germany to her knees. The strategy was to make a powerful and swift attack in the north, pierce the German right flank, and seize bridgeheads across the northern Rhine River. This plan would open the port of Antwerp, avoid an expensive frontal assault on the Siegfried Line, and also give the Allied Forces an open gateway to Berlin. The Allied commanders were convinced that this plan would not only shorten the war, but also relieve our far reaching supply routes. (8) (Map A)

(5) A-1, p. 318; (6) A-3, p. 11; (7) A-4, p. 66; (8) A-5, p. 72.

Plan should be executed

OPERATION "MARKET-GARDEN"

The spearhead of the plan, to roll through the German northern flank, was to be the British Second Army, commanded by Lieutenant General Miles Dempsey. A newly organized airborne army, under Lieutenant General Lewis H. Brereton, was to assist the British and act as the point of the spear. The First Allied Airborne Army consisted of one British airborne division, two American airborne divisions, one Polish brigade, Air Force units, and other special troops. (9)

Operation "Market-Garden" was the code name given the overall airground operation. The ground phase was known as "Garden". Its mission called for the British Second Army to attack ^{across} astride the Maas, Waal, and Rhine Rivers, following along the general axis of the cities Eindhoven-Nijmegen-Arnhem, and to dominate the country between the Rhine River and the Zuider Zee. (10)

Should be shown on map
"Market" was the code word pertaining to the airborne phase. The overall airborne objective was to capture and hold the vital crossings over the canals and rivers on the British Second Army's main axis of advance. (11)
The entire plan was to be put into action about 15 September 1944. The ground and airborne units were expected to gain contact on D plus 3. (12)

PLANS OF THE FIRST ALLIED AIRBORNE ARMY

On 10 September 1944, General Brereton called his staff together and discussed the varied details of "Market". He designated British Lieutenant General F. A. M. Browning as commander of the airborne assault forces (First Allied Airborne Corps). It was also decided that "Market" would be a daylight operation. This decision was made chiefly because of the effectiveness of the German night fighter aircraft and General Brereton was certain that our Air Force could maintain air superiority during the day. Coordination and troop control would also be much better in the day. (13)

At a later meeting, units of the Airborne Corps were assigned their missions. The First British Airborne Division, together with the Polish

(9) Personal knowledge; (10) A-6, p. 2; (11) A-6, p. 2; (12) Personal knowledge; (13) A-7, p. 11.

British commitment needed

Brigade, were to capture and hold the bridges at Arnhem. The American 82nd Airborne Division was ordered to seize the bridges over the Maas River at Grave, over the Waal River at Nijmegen, and the bridge over the Maas-Waal Canal. They were also to hold the key terrain between Groenbeek and Nijmegen. The U. S. 101st Airborne Division was given the mission to capture and hold the bridges over the Aa River and the Willem-Vaart Canal at Veghel, over the Dommel River at St. Oedenrode, and the bridge over the Welhelms Canal near Zon. They were also to capture the city of Eindhoven. (14) (Map B)

The First Allied Airborne Army Staff had considerable weight lifted from its shoulders when the decision was finally reached to make "Market" a daylight operation. Another important decision was facing them, the selection of the most favorable flight routes and drop zones in the operational area. Major General James M. Gavin, Commanding General of the 82d Airborne Division, stated in his book, "Airborne Warfare", "The selection of the drop and landing zones has a greater influence on the final outcome of an airborne operation than any other single planning step". (15)

After hours of staff study, two air routes and the landing areas were selected. The one northern route was scheduled to carry the First British Airborne Division and the U. S. 82d Airborne Division. The drop zones for these divisions were designated: for the British, DZ "X", "Y", and "K"; for the 82d, DZ "N", "O", and "T". The northern route was the most direct; however, the flight time over enemy territory was longer than the other route. (16) (Map B) *Not shown*
Does not show this info

The second selected route, a southern route, was assigned to the American 101st Airborne Division. This route led them to drop zones labeled DZ "A", "B", and "C". The southern route was the longest with most of the flight being over friendly country. The greatest obstacle of this route was the many anti-aircraft guns encountered when the formation passed over the enemy front lines. (17) (Map B)

(14) A-7, p. 12; (15) A-5, p. 81; (16) A-6, p. 7; (17) A-6, Appendix "B"

PLANS OF THE 101st AIRBORNE DIVISION

*Terrain map
note*

Generally speaking, the operational areas assigned to the 101st Airborne Division were ideal sectors for an airborne operation. The countryside lent itself to many wide, flat, and open fields which were excellent for parachute, or glider landings; there were scattered woods which offered the paratroopers cover and concealment from the enemy. The ground was damp and soggy, crossed by many drainage ditches and canals; however, this was no obstacle to the airborne foot soldier. This type of terrain helped protect the parachutists from any great force of enemy armor; it was good country and the troopers liked it for the opening round of fighting. (18)

With such favorable terrain, General Maxwell D. Taylor, Commanding General of the 101st Airborne Division, made plans to accomplish his division's mission by concentrating forces at strategic points along the Eindhoven-Zon-St. Oedenrode-Veghel corridor. The division was to seize and hold the vital bridges and towns along this corridor until forward units of the British Second Army had passed through the 101st lines. (19) (Map C)

The 101st Airborne Division contained three parachute infantry regiments, one glider infantry regiment, artillery, and special units. The majority of these units composed the "D" day echelon, excepting the glider regiment, artillery and those units whose equipment was not air transportable. The more heavily equipped organizations were scheduled to arrive on the battle scene at a later date. (20)

*My should be
Blaug*

The three parachute infantry regiments were the 501st, 502d and the 506th. The mission of the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment was to drop on DZ "A", capture the railroad and highway bridges over the Aa River, and the Willem Vaart Canal, and then hold the town of Veghel. (21) (Map C)

The 502d Parachute Infantry Regiment was assigned the mission of securing the landing zone for the glider echelon, seizing the highway bridge at St. Oedenrode and then be ready to relieve the 506th of their positions at (18) (19) Personal knowledge; (20) A-8, p. 267; (21) A-8, p. 267.

Zon. (22) (Map C)

The 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment was assigned the mission of seizing the bridge crossing the Wilhelmina Canal near the town of Zon, capturing the city of Eindhoven, and seizing the four bridges which spanned the Comel River in the city. (23) (Map C)

The 101st troops' morale and spirit were extremely high. Their unit training had been very thorough and demanding in all phases. The schedule had ordered all types of air and ground problems. Among the small unit leaders there were many veterans of the Normandy Campaign and they lacked no confidence in their combat ability. (24)

At 1900 hours, 16 September 1944, the detailed planning in all units of the First Allied Airborne Army had been completed. General Brereton was ready to throw the switch which would put into action the largest airborne operation ever attempted. (25)

THE MARSHALLING AREA

A Marshalling Area included the departure airfields and the marshalling camps normally used to concentrate personnel and equipment prior to their participation in an airborne operation.

On 14 September 1944, the divisions of the airborne army were quietly waiting at their training camps in England. The "Alert" call was sounded and division planning wheels began to roll. They packed quickly and started silently moving into each assigned marshalling area. (26)

The British troops remained in their sealed areas near the town of Swindon. The 82d Airborne Division was marshalled in the Nottingham area and the 101st Airborne Division moved to several airfields scattered throughout the Newbury area. A total of seven British and seventeen American airfields were used to get operation "Market" airborne. (27) (Map C)

THE THIRD BATTALION, 506th PARACHUTE INFANTRY ON "D-3"

It was on 14 September 1944, when Colonel Robert F. Sink, Commanding (22), (23), (24) Personal knowledge; (25), (26) A-7, p. 14; (27) A-7, p. 14.

Officer, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, alerted his battalion commanders in a meeting at regimental headquarters. The commanders left the meeting and returned to their respective battalions anxious to start the initial preparations. They knew exactly what to do because the 506th had been alerted several times for other missions. After all preparations had been made, the missions had been cancelled. (28)

Major Oliver M. Horton, Commanding Officer, Third Battalion, 506th Parachute Infantry, reached his headquarters and quickly called for the battalion executive officer. After a short conference Major Robert F. Harwick, the executive officer, sent for the battalion staff and the company commanders.

A few minutes later, the officers who were to attend the meeting strolled rather casually into battalion headquarters. Each of them had a notebook and the "this must be another show-down inspection" look upon their face. The group saluted and seated themselves around the commander's desk. One could not help but notice the tired and serious look on Major Horton's face. After a few seconds the atmosphere of the room changed, and we knew another airborne mission had been born. (29)

Major Horton wasted no time. He quickly announced, "Gentlemen, this battalion has been alerted for an airborne mission and must be prepared to clear this camp not later than 0800 hours, 15 September". Each officer in the meeting seemed a bit surprised, but did not appear too excited about the mission. We were wondering exactly where and when the jump would be, but certainly we knew better than to ask the question. The answer would come in time. (30)

The commander continued in his slow, deliberate, southern drawl. He addressed the S-1, 1st Lieutenant Alex Bobuck, "Bo, get me rosters of all personnel in the battalion who can make a combat jump, also get rosters of all personnel, including prisoners, who we will have to leave behind. Those troopers who do not go with us will remain in a base camp that will be (28), (29), (30), (31) Personal knowledge.

established at regiment. I want every physically fit jumper to make this operation". (31)

Major Horton then turned to the Battalion Operations Officer, Captain John Kiley, "John, contact the S-4 and plan for the battalion to be packed and loaded in trucks not later than 0745 hours, 15 September. We will not carry any equipment except that needed for combat. Get me a status report on all the battalions' crew-served weapons. I will give you more details concerning the move later in the afternoon". (32)

Ho looked at me, the Battalion Intelligence Officer, "I want you to take your section and leave immediately for the marshalling area. You will not return here. Go by regiment and contact the S-2, there you will be 'Bigoted' and briefed in the details of this operation. You will also be furnished maps, photos, and overlays. Take that equipment and set up a briefing room in the marshalling area. Make the room large enough to accommodate a platoon. The S-3 will contact you tonight".

Major Horton, facing the four company commanders, continued issuing his fast and brief orders. "I want all the assigned personnel sealed within the battalion area as quickly as possible. All leaves and passes are cancelled. Hereafter, no one will leave this area without a special pass. Have your troops pack all their personal property in the "B" bags, fold the bunks, and completely clear the barracks of all equipment. The S-4 will contact you later and issue instructions concerning all supplies and storage. Remember, the battalion will take nothing with them except combat clothing and weapons. You will not disclose any information concerning this mission to the troops. I will tell them at a battalion mass formation." (33)

The meeting ended as abruptly as it had begun. The officers returned to their units and started the first phase of "Market" preparations for movement to the marshalling areas.

The men were not informed about the coming operation, but everyone in (31), (32), (33), (34) Personal knowledge.

the area knew something "hot" was about to happen. The air surrounding us seemed to get close and tense. The entire battalion was steaming with excitement, not the wild kind, but the kind of quick action and efficiency. Each soldier seemed to know exactly what to do. Men were hurrying everywhere, some turning in equipment and others drawing equipment. Vehicles were coming in and going out of the area. The battalion had its throttle opened at full speed. (34)

After a short while, the advance party assigned to set up the briefing room was ready to leave for the marshalling area. The party was composed of myself, members of the intelligence section, two jeeps, and trailers loaded with equipment to be used in the briefing room. We had previously organized a number of briefing rooms; therefore, the group had accumulated much experience and equipment. The only problem facing us was the time element. Would there be enough time?

Equipment required to set up an efficient and well organized airborne briefing room is not acquired through normal supply channels or by requisitions. The material we carried in the S-2 trailers had been primarily obtained through the efforts of the intelligence section. They had scrounged and "moonlight requisitioned" most of the necessary items. The equipment we used included the following: several large electric ceiling lamps with reflectors to be used over the map and overlay boards, a number of large rectangular plywood boards for mounting operational documents, an aerial photo interpreting kit, several rolls of acetate, a bastard type of draftsman kit, black cloth to cover the top secret documents, a large quantity of fine grained white sand for the sandtables, and many other minor items. To those in higher headquarters this equipment meant nothing, but to those at battalion level, it was very difficult to obtain. We treasured each piece of it. (35)

The advanced party arrived at the Chilbolton Airport (Third Battalion (34), (35) Personal knowledge.

Marshalling Area) and surveyed the mass of English Nissen hutments which surrounded several long black-topped runways. A large hutment was selected for the briefing room. The section unloaded the trailers and immediately started organizing the hutment. The map boards were conveniently placed about the room with the bright reflected lights hung over them. The sandtables were built and located in the center of the hutment. These sandtables would be designed to represent our drop zones and objectives.

After several hours, the S-3 arrived with more information concerning "Market" and stated that the battalion would reach here early the next morning. While the section continued to work in the briefing room, Captain Kiley and I studied the battalion mission, the regimental missions, and the enemy intelligence reports. It was late in the night before we had completed drafting the battalion plans. (36)

THE THIRD BATTALION ARRIVES AT THE MARSHALLING AREA (D-2)

Early on the morning of 15 September 1944, the troops began to arrive at the Chilbolton Airport. Each unit was guided into their assigned company area and started preparing themselves for the short stay. When the companies had finally settled into their hutments and tents, the battalion commander called for his S-2 and S-3. Together, we studied each detail of "Market".

There were several changes made in the original drafted plans and they were written and re-written. Finally, the orders were ready to be posted in the briefing room. Overlaye were drawn, photos pasted together, and the sandtables brought to life. The briefing room seemed to change from a quiet, empty room to one of action and energy. Every wall was covered with squares of paper and maps with neat red and blue lines on them. The sandtables had changed from just a box full of dry sand in a quiet country-side studded with green fields, canals, roads, bridges, and towns. The town of Eindhoven and the bridges in that area seemed to leap from the sand. Those were the areas where our bitterest fighting was to take place.

(36) Personal knowledge.

While the last preparations were being made in the briefing room, I walked around the battalion area to contact the company commanders concerning maps and security measures. In walking from company to company, I could not help but note the actions of the various groups of soldiers. They seemed to have a casual attitude toward the entire operation and were going about their duties in a most cheerful and determined manner.

The troops were quite earnestly occupied in drawing those supplies to make them completely ready for combat. They were cleaning their rifles, sharpening knives and bayonets; machine gunners were filling their ammunition belts, and mortarmen were uncasing round after round of mortar ammunition. Other riflemen were stripping grenades from their cartons and adjusting the pins. A few men were writing those last minute letters to their wives, mothers, and sweethearts. Everyone was busy, there was no time to waste.

The battalion went to mess late in the evening. We ate in a large mess hall staffed and operated by area service troops. Our soldiers enjoyed the thought of not having to do kitchen police duty and other labor details. They only had to concentrate on the coming combat operation. The food was excellent; we had large steaks for almost every meal and plenty of ice cream. It reminded one of the last meal a prisoner would get just before he was hanged.

After mess each evening, the battalion Chaplains would hold religious services. It was interesting to see the large groups of tough parachutists gather and kneel in prayer before the various field altars. We had every denomination in the battalion. There were Jews, Catholics, Protestants and only a very few atheists. Strange, but I had never before noticed as many of the troopers attending church. When the services were over, the soldiers returned to their quarters and continued preparing their weapons to meet the Germans. (37)

The briefing room was now ready to function. The battalion Operation Order No. 1 had been finished and issued to the company commanders. They
(37) Personal knowledge.

would plan their individual unit operations from this order. A briefing schedule was prepared for the next day.

The schedule allotted certain time periods to each unit. The first period was for the battalion commander to orient all the officers; the second period was assigned to the company commanders for briefing their platoon leaders and noncommissioned officers; next, the platoon leaders would brief their units. The last period was scheduled for the squad leaders to brief their twelve men. There was no time to waste with this schedule; all units had to brief once and do it thoroughly. We needed more time, and then could be certain that each individual soldier was familiar with the entire operation. (38)

BRIEFING DAY (D-1)

At about 0700 hours, 16 September 1944, the battalion commander and all the officers were assembled in the briefing room. This meeting was quite different to our usual officer conferences. There was no loud talking and cheerful greetings among the officers. They were all quiet and resolute. They had come for only one reason, that being to absorb every detail of the "Market" plan.

The battalion commander oriented the group with the high level plans behind the "Market-Garden" operation. He then discussed the division and regimental missions. After the commander had finished, it was my turn to present the S-2 picture.

The enemy situation was pointed out on the large maps and aerial photographs. Our flight would encounter flak only after passing over the enemy front lines and it would probably continue to the drop zone. There was little known about the enemy dispositions in the Eindhoven area. We did know that German service and headquarters troops were garrisoned in the city and an Officers Candidate School had been located at Zon. No German combat units had been reported in these towns. Enemy forces were not expected to be on the drop zone; however, we could expect to encounter light armored

(38) Personal knowledge.

patrols. The civilians throughout the area were expected to be friendly. After completing the enemy situation, maps and photos were issued to the officers. These documents were only issued to the key personnel within the battalion. (39)

The Battalion S-3 took charge of the briefing after the enemy situation had been discussed. He briefed the group on the detailed mission of the division, the regiment, and then the battalions. He started with the Third Battalion: "This battalion will land on DZ "C" at 1330 hours 17 September. The planes will fly over the DZ at 110 mph with an altitude of 1000 to 800 feet. The red light will come on at 1325 hours, five minutes before the green light. All troops will jump on the green light. A series of white panels will mark the DZ. Immediately upon landing on the DZ, the battalion will assemble on a green smoke signal, reorganize and secure DZ "C"." (40)

"The First Battalion will land on the same DZ, immediately following the Third Battalion; reorganize and proceed to seize the bridge at Zon. Regimental Headquarters Company and the Second Battalion will land on DZ "C", reorganize and attack Zon from the north. (41)

When these battalions have completed the initial missions, the regiment will attack to the south and capture the city of Eindhoven." (Map C)

After the S-3 briefing, the officers walked about the room studying the operational maps, photos, overlays, and other documents. When the battalion commander was certain that each officer fully understood the entire operation, the conference was dismissed. The officers returned to their respective units to start their own organizational briefings.

The lights in the battalion briefing room burned throughout the night and units continued marching in and out of the room. Troops were hurriedly briefed and some of them left the room with only a vague idea of what they would do after leaving the drop zone. (42)

(39), (40), (41), (42) Personal knowledge.

"D" DAY

This was the day we had been "sweating out". It was Sunday, 17 September 1944, and the beginning of a beautiful sunny day. The thought of this mission being "scratched" had completely passed from every mind. It was perfect flying weather, ceiling unlimited, and visibility for miles.

The battalion was awake very early and everyone was arranging his combat equipment. Each parachutist has a particular method of fixing his individual equipment. There is a certain way in which the troopers pack their small rations and fit grenades into the large thigh pockets on the combat suits. Each trooper strapped a trench knife to his boot and fixed a pistol or carbine where it could be easily reached upon landing. They wanted to be ready for action immediately upon landing.

While the battalion was preparing to move to the aircraft parking areas, the planes could still be heard circling and landing on the runways. Some of the planes arrived so late that they only had time to load and take off. The troops were ready and the planes had been parked by 0830 hours. Thirty-six C-47's were assigned to the battalion for the air lift. Each company was loaded into nine of these planes. A plane load was composed of the plane crew, about nineteen jumpers and a jumpmaster. (43)

At 0900 hours the battalion had formed into plane groups. A guide was detailed to each group and he marched it to the waiting aircraft. Upon arrival at the planes, we found our parachutes and equipment bundles neatly stacked beneath the planes' wings. The troopers placed the equipment bundles in the cargo racks under the belly of the planes. These parachute equipment bundles carried extra ammunition, medical supplies, heavy communication equipment, and anti-tank mines. There were about four bundles loaded into each plane. (44)

The paratroopers strapped on their chutes and readjusted their equipment. The individual equipment consisted of demolitions, grenades, a carbine (43), (44) Personal knowledge.

or rifle, a trench knife, rations, ammunition, and some personal items. Each soldier, with all this equipment, weighed about three hundred pounds. While the troops were adjusting their equipment, the jumpmasters held a short conference with the pilots. They discussed details concerning the flight, jump signals and the drop zone. (45)

At 0945 hours we climbed into the planes, fastened the safety belts, and twenty men sat in the aluminum bucket seats - they faced each other - ten on each side of the plane. The planes began to warm their engines and at 1000 hours they taxied down the runways to take off. (46)

THE FLIGHT AND JUMP

The planes made wide circles above the airport. They continued to circle and rendezvous until the huge air armada was in formation, then proceeded on the southern route to Holland. During the flight, one could look through the open cargo door of the planes and see that the sky was almost filled with troop carrier ships. They were on both sides of us and as far to the rear as one could see. This sight gave one a feeling of confidence in the might of the Allied Army. (47)

Just before reaching the coast of France, our plane formation rendezvoused with the fighter escort planes. These fighters furnished high and low protective cover for the slow C-47's. Their mission was to maintain air superiority. (48)

The jumpers in my plane were extremely quiet; most of them were staring into space or trying to sleep. About thirty minutes from the drop zone, the pilot accidentally turned on the green jump light. The troopers immediately leaped from their seats and prepared to jump from the plane. Upon finding that the green light flash was an accident, the group returned to their seats. They continued to be tense and nervous during the remaining part of the flight. (49)

The formation passed over the front lines. The Allied lines were (45), (46), (47), (48), (49) Personal knowledge.

easily recognized by their display of identification panels and the orange smoke. Enemy anti-aircraft fire started bursting throughout the formation just after we crossed the German lines. The flak became more intense as we flew deeper into the enemy lines. The escort fighter planes zoomed at these flak gun positions and many of them were destroyed by rockets and strafing. Only a small number of the C-47's were seriously damaged by the enemy fire. From our plane, we saw only two of the many troop ships go down in smoke. (50)

The red light flashed on at 1325 hours. The parachutists stood up, hooked their static lines to the cable and waited for the green jump light. As jumpmaster, I leaned out of the plane door and searched for the panels which the Pathfinders had used to mark DZ "C". When we passed over these panels the green light flashed and automatically we jumped from the plane. (51)

REORGANIZATION ON DZ "C" AND THE ATTACK ON ZON

Plane after plane flew over the drop zone and discharged the paratroopers - the sky seemed to be filled with them. The troopers oriented themselves immediately upon hitting the ground and rushed for their respective unit assembly areas. The assembly areas were generally located in a group of woods on the southern edge of the drop zone. The reorganization of the battalion was completed with little confusion and no enemy resistance encountered.

The First Battalion did not reorganize as a complete unit. As elements of that battalion were assembled, they rushed to accomplish their mission of seizing the bridge near Zon. (52) (Map D)

The Second Battalion completely reorganized and proceeded on its mission of attacking Zon from the north. The attack started about an hour after the regiment had landed. (53) (Map D)

The Third Battalion, which was the first unit to land on DZ "C", reorganized and quickly secured the drop zone by encircling it with riflemen and machine guns. The defense of the DZ was only held a short time before it (50), (51) Personal knowledge; (52), (53) Recent Statement of Lt. Col. Charles H. Chase, former 506th Regimental Executive Officer.

was taken over by units of the 502d Parachute Infantry Regiment. After being relieved, the Third Battalion reverted to regimental reserve and was located only a few hundred yards southeast of the drop zone. (54) (Map D)

The Zon area was defended by groups of German riflemen and two 88-mm artillery pieces. The First and Second Battalions captured the town of Zon in a short time and with relatively few casualties. When these battalions reached the Zon bridge, the Germans blew it up in their faces. A platoon of the 326th Airborne Engineer Battalion, which was attached to the 506th, quickly started building a foot bridge to cross the canal. It was after dark when the bridge was completed. (55) (Map D)

The regiment began crossing the foot bridge the minute it was completed and moved southward on the highway toward Eindhoven. It halted at the small town of Bokt and received orders to organize a defense position south of the town. (56) (Map D)

The battalion defense at Bokt was hastily organized. The troops were very tired and many went to sleep without "digging in" their positions. No fire plan was used and no patrols were sent forward of the immediate area. Some of the soldiers did not know the "Password" and challenging was done in a careless manner. (57)

Later in the night, we received orders from regiment to be prepared to attack Eindhoven early the next morning. The plan for the attack was to advance on the city in column of battalions; the Third Battalion was to lead the formation, followed by the Second and First. The route of advance was the main highway leading from Bokt to Eindhoven. (58)

THE ATTACK ON EINDHOVEN (D plus 1)

It had rained the night before, but today was clear and the troops were awake early preparing for the attack on Eindhoven. The attack on the city was initially planned to take place during the night of 17 September 1944, but was postponed because a large force of enemy troops were reported (54), (55), (56), (57), (58) Personal knowledge.

moving into the city. (59)

The Third Battalion was scheduled to move out at 0800 hours. The attack formation was two companies forward and one back. H Company was on the battalion left. I Company on the right, followed by G Company. Headquarters company was about six hundred yards to the center rear of the battalion. The S-2 was ordered to precede the battalion with a patrol by about fifteen minutes. Our mission was to locate any enemy positions on or near the highway leading into Eindhoven. The patrol consisted of the S-2, four enlisted men and one SCR 300 radio operator. We departed from the battalion area at 0745 hours, crossed the field at Bokt, and headed south down the open highway. (60) (Map E).

The patrol had moved down the highway for several hundred yards and then noticed the leading companies of the battalion moving into position. H and I companies were in the fields on either side of the highway. (61)

The patrol continued on a few more hundred yards then were fired upon from hedgerows on either side of the highway. One member of the patrol was wounded. We quickly took cover in the nearby ditches and sent a radio message to the battalion commander. It was assumed that the fire had come from an enemy platoon armed with machine guns and rifles. (Map E)

The battalion continued to advance, thus causing the enemy to slowly withdraw toward the center of Eindhoven. As the unit reached the outskirts of the city, the enemy fire increased. The assault companies deployed their platoons and made ready for more action. The enemy had now ceased withdrawing and wanted to stand their ground. (62)

The German machine gun, mortar, and direct fire from two 88-mm gun positions caused the battalion to cease advancing. H Company, on the left, was located in a deep and long ditch. To their front was a wide and open field bordered by a row of brick houses. The Germans had occupied these houses and were firing directly into the face of H Company. (63) (Map E) (59), (60), (61), (62), (63) Personal knowledge.

On the battalion right was I Company; it was also receiving heavy fire from occupied houses to its front and they could not move forward. G Company in the reserve position, was committed on the immediate right flank of I Company. After reaching this position, they were involved in the same enemy fire which was holding down I Company. The entire battalion was on line and could go no further forward. (64) (Map E)

At the Battalion Command Post, the S-3, Captain Kiley, was preparing to call the regiment for assistance. The battalion commander could not be located, he had been last seen in the G Company front line. While Captain Kiley and I were talking at the command post, a clear message came over the battalion radio. The message stated, "All the officers in H Company have been killed. We are pinned down and cannot move; send an officer to take command of the company." (65)

The battalion commander entered the command post as the message from H Company was being received. He sent me to take command of the company. As I was leaving, a sniper fired and his bullet hit Captain Kiley in the throat, killing him instantly.

Upon arriving at H Company, I found the entire unit stretched out in a deep ditch. The ditch contained many wounded and dead soldiers lying about. It was found that the company officers had not been killed, just the company commander and one platoon leader had been seriously wounded. The platoon leaders were contacted and a plan was made to continue the attack. One platoon, with machine gun and mortars, remained in the ditch to support the attack. The other two platoons attacked from the right and left of the company. The attack was successful, for H Company seized the row of houses to our front and captured a number of prisoners. The company could advance no further and requested assistance.

The regimental commander ordered the Second Battalion on a wide sweeping movement around the Third Battalion left flank. The envelopment was successful (64), (65) Personal knowledge.

in destroying the two 88-mm gun positions and completely routing the enemy. After the pressure had been relieved on the Third Battalion front, ^{the 3rd A.} it pushed into the center of Eindhoven. The Second Battalion continued forward and occupied the four bridges which crossed the Dommel River. (66)

The Dutch civilians were very friendly and cooperative during the fighting; however, many times they would hinder our operations by rendering exaggerated enemy information. After the battle for Eindhoven, hundreds of civilians crowded the streets and waved their orange flags of freedom. Suddenly the crowds became silent and rushed from the streets into their houses. The flags stopped waving and within only a few minutes few civilians were in sight. A German panzer division had been reported advancing on Eindhoven. The report was later found to be false. (66)

Orders were issued to occupy Eindhoven and defense sectors were assigned to each battalion. The First Battalion was given the northwestern portion of the city. The Second Battalion was assigned to defend the eastern section and occupy the Dommel River bridges. The Third Battalion moved into the southwestern part of the city. (67) (Map E)

Each company was assigned a sector in the battalion area. Riflemen dug foxholes along the streets and placed road-blocks at street intersections. Patrols were sent out to the southern edge of the city. These patrols were to observe any enemy activity and also watch for British units. Just before dark we heard tanks moving into the edge of Eindhoven. Our first thought was that of a German armored attack. Later the tanks were found to be the British Guards Armored Division. It was a comforting feeling to know we now had contact with the British Second Army and also armored support was available. (68)

THE THIRD BATTALION IN EINDHOVEN (D plus 2)

We had been on Dutch soil only two days and our luck had not been too bad. The regiment had accomplished each mission, there had been relatively (66), (67), (68) Personal knowledge.

few casualties and the troops' morale was extremely high.

The morning of 19 September 1944, was spent improving our defensive positions, reorganizing the companies, and cleaning equipment. The British had now pushed through Eindhoven and a steady stream of supply vehicles were on the highway moving northward.

In the middle of the afternoon the battalion received orders to move from Eindhoven and occupy the town of Winterle. It was a small town located about six miles west of our present positions. The enemy situation in Winterle was not known; therefore, we expected almost anything to happen.

(69), (Map E)

The battalion column had cleared the outskirts of Eindhoven at 1900 hours. The formation moving toward Winterle was column of companies, G leading, followed by I, Headquarters and H Companies. It was now dark and the column moved very slow across the rough terrain.

The unit was within about two miles from Winterle when the battalion point halted a group of Dutch civilians. They were questioned about the enemy activity around the town of Winterle. The civilians reported that many Germans had evacuated the town just before dark. To confirm this report we organized a large patrol to reconnoiter the Winterle area before the battalion moved any further. (70) (Map E)

While the Dutch civilians were being questioned, we could hear the droning sound of German planes. The planes had reached Eindhoven and were dropping parachute flares, the entire city area seemed to become bright as day. About twenty Nazi planes followed the flares and bombed the center of the city. (71)

The battalion marched back to Eindhoven and found that the bombing had caused many fires throughout the area. The British column which had been steadily moving through the streets had been halted by burning supply trucks. After seeing this destruction, we realized how fortunate the battalion had been when it received orders to move from Eindhoven to Winterle. The remaining (69), (70), (71) Personal knowledge.

part of 19 September 1944, was spent in organizing our previously occupied defensive positions and wondering if those bombers would return to the city.

(72)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

Operation "Market" was the largest airborne operation ever attempted by any army. It was the first time a single organization (First Allied Airborne Army) had the organic means of employing every phase of airborne warfare. This operation was definitely a step toward the present theory of unification of service and command.

The operations of the First Allied Airborne Army exhibited expert coordination between the British and American staffs and also between the air and ground forces of both nations. The coordination entailed in this operation was emphasized by the following facts: a British general was commanding an untried newly organized army composed of British, Polish, and American troops; British fighter aircraft successfully escorted American planes and British armor supported U. S. Infantry. These general facts prove the extent of coordination which was required at all levels within the airborne army.

The initial success of the airborne attack in Holland depended upon several major factors: (1) The overall coordination between the units within the airborne army; (2) The careful and strategic selection of parachute drop zones; (3) The tactical planning and considerations in the assignment of unit missions; (4) The high morale and aggressive spirit of the airborne troops. (These factors, welded together, made the First Allied Airborne Army a successful fighting team.)

The drop zone assigned to the Third Battalion was in strict accordance with the airborne doctrine that a DZ should be located as near to the unit objective as possible. DZ "C" was ideally located. It was within two miles of the town of Zon and the bridge crossing the Wilhelmina Canal. This distance allowed sufficient space for the battalions to maneuver and quickly attack their objectives. When a drop zone is too distant for the troop ob-

jectivs, the element of surprise is lost. The enemy is allowed time to plan counter-attacks and reinforce their local defenses.

The attack on Zon caught the enemy by complete surprise. The airborne forces had seized their objectives so swiftly that the local defenses had no time to be reinforced.

The battalion preparation and movement to the marshalling area on 15 September 1944, was completed without confusion or disorder. Prior to being alerted for "Market" the battalion had practiced moving into marshalling areas. They had also completely prepared for several airborne missions which had been cancelled. Such preparations gave the battalion valuable experience in the complicated procedures involved in marshalling area techniques. Every unit should have a "Standard Operating Procedure" concerning preparations for airborne missions.

The location and operation of the marshalling was excellent. It was situated adjacent to the "take off" airport. This location allowed close personal liaison between the air and ground personnel; such liaison is definitely necessary. The marshalling area was staffed and completely operated by non-combatant service personnel. This method allowed the airborne troops to concentrate on their battle preparations and forget about the various labor details.

The briefing period assigned to the Third Battalion was too short. Briefing had to be done too quickly. All personnel were generally briefed, but many of the soldiers did not know what their unit was to do after it assembled on the drop zone. Sufficient time should be given in briefing to allow the company commanders the opportunity to review their units and re-brief any individual who does not fully understand his part in the operation. Maps and aerial photographs were only issued to key personnel within the battalion. Small maps and printed photos should be distributed to the individual soldier in order for him to perform his combat duties more effectively and also gather more accurate information concerning the enemy.

The battalion started loading the aircraft at 0945 hours, 17 September 1944. Some of the planes had arrived at the airport only a few minutes before the troops boarded them. It would have been much less confusing if all the planes had been parked in their assigned areas the night of D-2. This would have enabled the equipment bundles to have been placed in the cargo racks before the troops arrived at the planes.

The first time many of the jumpmasters saw their pilots was at the airport just prior to "take off" time. Most of the jumpmasters held a short conference with their respective pilots while the troops were fitting their parachutes. Just before loading ~~time~~ is not the most favorable time for a conference with the pilots. The pilot-jumpmaster conference should be held on D-1 and at that time they should discuss every detail concerning the flight, jump signals, and drop zones. Such a conference coordinates the efforts of both air and ground units and enables both services to have a greater understanding of each others mission. Harmony must start with the lower echelons.

The flight over the drop zone at Zon was ideal according to airborne beliefs. The pilots flew at the proper airspeed and discharged the parachutes at the correct altitude. No evasive action was taken when the anti-aircraft fire was received by the flight formation. The pilots held their planes on course and the formation passed over the DZ under their complete control. By flying a steady course, keeping the correct airspeed and maintaining the proper altitude, the airborne troops were dropped squarely on DZ "C". Thus they were able to assemble and reorganize much faster than it was expected.

On the night of 17 September 1944, the 506th Parachute Infantry was in a defensive position based on the town of Bokt. The Third Battalion's area was not well defended. It is believed that an enemy attack in that area would have been successful and possibly the capture of Eindhoven would have been delayed. The battalion did not have a coordinated fire plan, security within the area was poor, and outposts were improperly posted. The violation

of such defensive principles can be a fatal mistake.

The original plan for the 506th to attack Eindhoven during the night of 17 September 1944, was postponed because of a report that strong enemy forces were occupying the city. After receiving this report, no patrols were dispatched to verify its correctness or to locate any enemy positions. It is believed that several patrols should have visited the city to determine the enemy dispositions and to find favorable routes of approach for the attack. If the report had been found to be incorrect, the attack could have taken place as originally planned and the daylight frontal assault on Eindhoven would have been avoided.

The Third Battalion attack on Eindhoven was preceded by a patrol led by the S-2. The scouts from the leading companies could have accomplished the same mission as the patrol. It should not have been led by a battalion staff officer, and should have been sent to reconnoiter Eindhoven several hours before the attack. During the attack a staff officer has many more important duties than leading patrols.

When the leading companies of the Third Battalion were forced to halt their advance on Eindhoven, the reserve company was committed on the immediate right flank of I Company. The reserve was involved in the same fire fight as I Company and they were also forced to halt. G Company (reserve) should have made a wide sweeping movement and hit the enemy on their extreme left flank. This maneuver would have relieved the pressure on I Company and possibly would have enabled them to advance.

No patrols were sent to reconnoiter the town of Winterle before the battalion departure from Eindhoven. A reconnaissance should have been made of the town area and also the battalion's route of approach to the area. More information concerning Winterle would have enabled the battalion commander to devise more definite plans concerning the occupation of the town.

LESSONS

Some of the lessons taught by operation "Market" were:

1. Coordination is necessary at all levels of command when a force is composed of units from different nations. The First Allied Airborne Army is an excellent example of coordination between allies.

2. Drop zones for airborne troops must be located near the unit objectives.

3. Airborne troops must be aggressive, move swiftly, and seize their objectives immediately after landing. The enemy cannot be allowed time to strengthen its defense.

4. The element of surprise is one of the most powerful weapons carried by airborne troops; if the enemy is forewarned, he will employ his reserves and reinforce the local defensive positions.

5. Marshalling areas for airborne units should be located adjacent to the "take off" airfields in order to permit the necessary personal liaison between the air and ground units.

6. Marshalling areas should be operated by non-combatant service personnel who are specially trained in that type of duty.

7. Briefing schedules should allow sufficient time for each individual soldier to become thoroughly familiar with his unit's mission.

8. Small maps and printed aerial photos of the operational area should be issued to the individual soldier. These documents would enable him to perform his duties more effectively and gather more accurate information concerning the enemy.

9. Pilots and jumpmasters should hold a formal conference before an airborne operation. The conference should coordinate all details concerning the flight and drop zones.

10. Air Force units dropping parachutists must maintain the correct airspeed, altitude, and avoid evasive action.

11. Principles of defense must be applied in all defensive situations. The violation of these principles may affect the entire operation.

12. Reconnaissance patrols should not be given missions that unit scouts could accomplish.

13. Reconnaissance patrols, whenever possible, should precede any unit movement in unknown enemy territory. During the initial phases of an airborne operation, the time element may not allow reconnaissance patrols to the objective.

14. Battalion staff officers should not normally be assigned as patrol leaders.

15. When it is possible, the battalion reserve should envelope the enemy's flank and maneuver wide enough to avoid being involved in the same fire fight as the front line companies. When the reserve company is pinned down with the assault companies, the reserve is useless.